

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 PC-01 CU-02 COME-00 EB-07

LAB-04 SIL-01 /069 W

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O R 112208Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7855

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 1439

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PFOR, ES, HO

SUBJECT: COUP PLOTTING RESUMES

REF: (A) SAN SALVADOR 0193

(B) IR 6 829 941 75

(C) SAN SALVADOR 1413

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. REF (B) DESCRIBES A ROUND OF RUMORS OF COUP PLOTTING WHICH REPORTEDLY HAS BROKEN OUT AGAIN LIKE THAT EXPERIENCED IN SAN SALVADOR AT THE END OF LAST YEAR (REF A). DESCRIPTIONS OF THE WHOS AND WHYS INVOLVED ARE FOR THE MOST PART SIMILAR TO THOSE IN EARLIER REPORTS, NAMELY, DISSATISFIED COFFEE AND COTTON GROWERS USING RETIRED MILITARY OFFICERS WITH "COUP PRONE" REPUTATIONS TO APPROACH ACTIVE DUTY OFFICERS. AS WAS THOUGHT TO HAVE HAPPENED IN THE ALLEGED DECEMBER 1974 EFFORT, AT LEAST SOME OF THE ACTIVE DUTY OFFICERS AGAIN HAVE REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE

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AND THEN REPORTED THE APPROACHES TO THEIR SUPERIORS.

2. TWO NEW INGREDIENTS ARE WOVEN INTO THE CURRENT CROP OF RUMORS. THE FIRST IS AN UNEASINESS AND TENSION SAID TO BE BUILDING UP AS WE APPROACH MAY DAY (REF C). THIS SCENARIO PREDICTS SERIOUS PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS CAUSED BY JOINT DEMONSTRATIONS OF STUDENTS, TEACHERS, WORKERS AND CAMPESINOS AND HAS THE YOUNGER MILITARY OFFICERS MOVING TO AVERT CHAOS WHEN THE GOES IS UNABLE TO CONTAIN THE DISTURBANCES. THE OTHER NEW FACTOR WOULD BE THE IMPACT OF EVENTS OF THE LAST TWO WEEKS IN HONDURAS ON SALVADORAN COUNTERPARTS INSTITUTIONS. THOSE WITH A PROPENSITY FOR SEEING GOLPISTAS EVERYWHERE ARE CONCLUDING THAT THE YOUNGER OFFICERS HERE, SIMILARLY FRUSTRATED BY WHAT THEY VIEW AS INEPTITUDE AND LACK OF COMMITMENT OF THEIR SUPERIORS,

MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO IMITATE THEIR HONDURAN COLLEAGUES.

DURIN AN APRIL 10 CALL ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO EXCHANGE IMPRESSIONS ON THE UNITED BRANDS' BRIBERY CHARGE, THE AMBASSADOR ASKED BORGONOV IF HE SAW ANY POSSIBILITY THAT THE ACTIONS WITHIN THE HONDURAN MILITARY MIGHT INSPIRE A SIMILAR ATTEMPT HERE. THE MINISTER CONCEDED THAT THIS WAS ALWAYS A POSSIBILITY, BUT HE ADDED THAT IN EL SALVADOR, AS CONTRASTED TO HONDURAS, MANY LIEUTENANT COLONELS WERE ALREADY IN HIGH DECISION MAKING

POSITIONS. THE AMBASSADOR MENTIONED THAT THE EMBASSY HAD HEARD RUMORS OF COUP PLOTTING, SOME OF WHICH SUGGESTED THIS HONDURAN CONNECTION. BORGONOV SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD SIMILAR STORIES AND HAD PERSONALLY REPORTED THEM TO THE PRESIDENT. THE MINISTER SAID PRESIDENT MOLINA HAD ALREADY BEEN ALERTED AND WAS TAKING THEM INTO ACCOUNT.

4. COMMENT - IT IS DIFFICULT TO LEND MUCH CREDENCE TO THIS LATEST ROUND OF COUP PLOTTING RUMORS, ANY MORE THAN IT WAS IN DECEMBER OF LAST YEAR. IT IS EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO SEE ANY CHANCE OF A COUP ATTEMPT SUCCEEDING, IF IN FACT A SERIOUS TRY WERE MADE.

5. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE FOR CONCLUDING THAT THE ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR MAY DAY (SEE COMMENT REFTEL C) WILL DEGENERATE INTO THE PUBLIC DISORDER AND CHAOS PREDICTED
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BY THE COUP MONGERERS. THE MINISTER OF LABOR BELIEVES THIS WILL BE A NORMAL MAY DAY AND OUR INFORMATION FROM LABOR ELEMENTS DOES NOT CONTRADICT HIS VIEW. THE CAMPESINOS, EXCEPT FOR THE MINUSCULE, COMMUNIST-LED ATACES, ARE UNLIKELY TO JOIN ANY STREET TROUBLE-MAKING ALLIANCE, AND THE TEACHERS UNION (ANDES) - WHICH HAS A HISTORY OF PROVOKING STREET DISTURBANCES MAY PARTICIPATE BUT IT HAS ITS OWN PLAN FOR A NATIONWIDE PROTEST MARCH IN MID-JUNE, AND THEN ONLY IF ITS WAGE DEMANDS ARE TURNED

DOWN. THE INGREDIENTS AND WILL TO PROVOKE LARGE SCALE DISTURBANCES ON MAY DAY ARE NOT PRESENT. EVEN IF THEY WERE, THE GOES COULD DEAL WITH ANY DISORDER THAT MIGHT OCCUR.

6. AS TO HONDURAN EVENTS HAVING AN INSPIRATIONAL EFFECT ON SALVADORAN LT. COLONELS, THERE IS A PARALLEL LACK OF EVIDENCE. WE KNOW OF NO FESTERING DISCONTENT WITHIN THE MILITARY ABOUT THEIR INSTITUTION. THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S COMMENT ON GOES EFFORTS TO PLACE A NUMBER OF MIDDLE GRADE OFFICERS IN IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT POSITIONS IS ACCURATE - THE NEW MINAG, THE PRESIDENTS OF ANTEL AND INSAFI, ARE EXAMPLES.

7. MOST IMPORTANTLY, THERE IS NOT A SHRED OF EVIDENCE OF WHICH THE EMBASSY IS AWARE THAT ANY OFFICER IN A POSITION OF LINE TROOP COMMAND HAS JOINED THESE PLOTTING ACTIVITIES. ON THE CONTRARY, ALL EVIDENCE IS IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. SOME OFFICERS ON ACTIVE DUTY WHO HAVE BEEN NAMED AS HAVING BEEN APPROACHED HAVE REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE AND REPORTED THE APPROACH. IF, AS WE BELIEVE, THE PRESIDENT IS AWARE OF THESE STORIES AND IF HE FELT THERE WERE A SERIOUS THREAT TO HIS TENURE, WE WOULD EXPECT HIM TO TAKE EXTRAORDINARY COUNTER MEASURES. AGAIN, WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF SUCH MOVES.

8. WE CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT THERE ARE COUP MERCHANTS ABOUT AND WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING IS THE RECURRENCE OF ANOTHER ROUND OF RUMORS BASED ON THEIR EFFORTS TO SELL THEIR PRODUCT MUCH LIKE OTHERS WHICH OCCUR FROM TIME TO TIME, MOST OFTEN IN ANTICIPATION OF A PUBLIC CELEBRATION SUCH AS MAY DAY. AS DESCRIBED IN OUR FY 1976-77 CASP ANALYSIS, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THERE ARE HIGH HURDLES IN FRONT OF PRESIDENT MOLINA WHICH HE MUST CLEAR IF HE IS TO COMPLETE HIS TERM. GIVEN THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEMS AND OUR ANALYSIS THAT THE GOVERNING FORCES CANNOT RETAIN POWER BEYOND 1977 EXCEPT BY ENGAGING
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IN MASSIVE FRAUD IN THE ELECTIONS, WE DO NOT DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY THAT MOLINA COULD GIVE WAY PREMATURELY TO A MILITARY COUP. BUT WE DO NOT SENSE THAT THE PRESIDENT IS NOW APPROACHING SUCH A MOMENT. IN FACT, OUR FEELING IS THAT MOLINA IS IN A BETTER POSITION RELATIVE TO WHERE HE WAS FOUR MONTHS AGO. SEVERAL SECTORS ARE LESS EDBY. THE CAMPESINOS ARE SOMEWHAT HOPEFUL THAT THEY WILL BE GIVEN A GREATER INPUT INTO AGRICULTURAL POLICY. THE PRESIDENT ALSO RECEIVED SOME CREDIT FOR REMOVING THE CORRUPT MAJOR GUILLERMO ROEDER (SAN SALVADOR 878 AS PRESIDENT OF INSAFI AND REPLACING HIM WITH PRESTIGIOUS LT. COL. CARLOS EUGENIO VIDES CASANOVA. CAMBPELL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, POLITICAL SITUATION, PLOTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SANS01439
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750127-0702
From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750458/aaaacbja.tel
Line Count: 166
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 SAN SALVADOR 0193
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 SEP 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <09 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: COUP PLOTTING RESUMES
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PFOR, ES, HO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006